

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The incumbent of this position serves as a personal assistant to the Research Leader (RL) and other professional staff, coordinating a wide variety of administrative and clerical tasks essential to the program administration of the Management Unit. Provides technical and procedural advice in support of research program administration by identifying and analyzing issues and taking or recommending action using established guidelines. Serves as the initial point-of-contact for all questions, information and problem resolution in the areas of budget and accounting, agreements, travel, human resources, files management, correspondence preparation and control, time and attendance, office automation systems, and purchasing/procurement. At least 25% or more of the time is dedicated to program management and administrative assistance.

## **B. MAJOR DUTIES**

Provides a broad scope of program management and secretarial support for the Unit including the following:

Participates in program planning support work such as research project coordination, travel documentation, budget coordination/tracking, agreements, and purchasing/procurement of supplies and equipment, and human resources administration.

Provides training and advisory services to the Research Leader (RL) and professional staff in all program administrative procedures ensuring compliance with regulations.

Participates in the annual Resource Management Plan (ARMPS) process by assisting in developing and executing the annual budget, e.g. developing financial plans, monitoring spending, preparing financial reports, tracking and providing information on IKRC costs, and reviewing for consistency, accuracy, and procedural/reporting requirements. Compiles data/salaries/expenses/personnel changes/equipment/R&D needs based on previous year expenditures, and prepares and ensures accuracy of all reports.

Serves as the primary administrative business process point of contact for the Unit. Responsible for the administrative oversight of various business processes, which may include processing financial, procurement, extramural agreements, property, personnel, and other administrative instruments for the management unit. Maintains tracking logs, action items, manages administrative suspense items and transaction records. Based on delegated authority from the Research Leader may be responsible for approving expenditures, utilizing Purchase Card Management System and Blanket Purchase Agreements.

Prepares task orders for Research Support Agreements (RSA) by meeting with scientists to assess work and time requirements for the year; consults with appropriate university personnel to determine the correct salary and staff benefits; monitors Research Support Agreements (RSA) spending throughout the year and prepares the necessary paperwork to add or de-obligate funds as necessary; reviews Monthly Management Reports from the university for accuracy. Discrepancies are identified, researched, and reported to the supervisor or ADODR coordinating these actions with the Location Administrative Office.

Advises on procedural and documentation requirements for the Current Research Information System (CRIS) projects, research plans, annual progress reports, research associate proposals, manuscripts, international travel proposals and follow-up trip reports, and cooperative agreements, grants, and trusts.

Coordinates research documentation reporting requirements and provides oversight for the process; maintains a Project Documentation Manual; notifies project leader for CRIS units of termination; advises of the time-frame for approval of new project and/or termination of the old project; actively participates with the project leader in preparing the requirement documentation for compliance with CRIS guidelines; coordinates the peer review process; and electronically submits documents via the Agricultural Research Information System (ARIS).

Based on knowledge of the subject matter, assembles information from a variety of sources for the use of the RL at meetings, conferences, etc.

Uses an electronic calendar, database or spreadsheet software to document employee leave schedules and to commit the RL's time for appointments and meetings; transmits and receives documents and messages electronically.

Performs various tasks using on-line systems such as information searches on the World Wide Web (e.g., literature searches for CRIS projects) in support of the research program; and constructions and/or maintains Management Unit's web site (i.e., selects and scans materials, pictures, and slides; transfers files and information from various PC programs and downloads from the Internet onto the server; ensures that the information displayed on the Home Page is current and accurately reflects the Unit's research focus and accomplishments).

Uses a variety of graphical, spreadsheet, and database software packages (e.g., QuatroPro, Excel) to obtain statistical data from published reports and manipulate data to produce tables and charts for program management and administrative use. Prepares graphics, photos/slides, creates tables and graphs based on statistical data for RL and professional staff for use in presentations at meetings, workshops and conferences.

Produces a wide range of documents using a variety of office automation technologies. Applies advanced work processing software to materials involving complex formats such as automatic generation of indices and tables of contents, importation of graphics, charts, or special symbols or precise alignment of multiple columns.

Develops and implements new systems or administrative processes to meet Unit needs (e.g., Administrative Office Procedures Handbook, manuscript/abstract/ARIS action tracking system, files maintenance, etc.). Identifies, restructures, and recommends ways of eliminating, combining, simplifying or improving administrative and clerical office procedures and processes.

Prepares travel requests and vouchers for foreign and domestic travel. Maintains a detailed knowledge of travel policies and regulations in order to serve as a technical resource to Unit personnel. Advises on travel allowances and requirement and ensures adherence to travel regulations. Uses automated systems and software for travel and voucher preparation.

Screens all calls and visitors, answering most questions on established policy or routine matters. When calls are referred to the RL, the incumbent furnishes readily obtainable information to aid in the discussion.

Receives and reads all incoming correspondence directed to the Unit and initiates actions necessary for its proper disposition. Records correspondence referred to staff members reflecting delegations of responsibility and follows through to ensure timely disposition. Maintains control records and follow-up measures on incoming correspondence and action documents to ensure prompt handling. Independently prepares responses to inquiries on routine matters. Reviews all formal outgoing correspondence for proper format, grammar, punctuation, etc., in accordance with Agency correspondence guidelines.

Coordinates the processing of manuscripts and reports for public information; edits material for correct structure, clarity and arrangement of format for scientific journals and other media.

Participates in Unit reviews and workshops; keeps managers and scientists informed of upcoming reviews; prepares handouts; if requested, makes presentations related to the procedural and documentation requirements of the reporting system.

Schedules conferences and meetings, including arranging logistics, preparing agendas, and notifying participants.

Serves as principal timekeeper to the location. Responsibilities include; prepares, maintains, and transmits Time and Attendance (T&A) reports using automated agency program (STAR) to the National Finance Center (NFC); trains back-up timekeeper to serve during incumbent's absence; prepares and submits Leave Audits/Lump Sum payments and Donor/Recipient reports as required; reviews T&A logs of Unit personnel for completeness and accuracy; and provides technical pay and leave advice on routine matters.

Establishes, maintains and revises the office filing system.

Completes requests for personnel actions and writes and/or provides sample position descriptions; distributes forms and instructions for annual performance ratings and ensures timely, proper completion; provides guidance on preparation of Individual Development Plans for the staff; and may assist in local recruitment and/or hold new employee orientation sessions.

Coordinates the submission of RPES case write-ups for mandatory cyclic reviews. Advises staff of current requirements and schedules. Reviews write-ups for format, completeness and conformance to existing policies and procedures. Suggests improvements for clarity and to better demonstrate accomplishments. Assists in developing in-depth reviewer contact lists. Maintains current publications listings.

Performs other duties as assigned.

## **C. EVALUATION FACTORS**

### **1. Knowledge Required by the Position**

Knowledge of Departmental and Agency programs, regulations, policies, organizational structure, and procedures to carry out fact-finding, analysis and evaluation functions. Practical knowledge of the Center/Location's organizational and program structure as it relates to the Agency's mission.

Ability to interpret and apply guidelines involving program and administrative processes.

Knowledge of national research programs and initiatives related to Unit programs in order to facilitate appropriate communications.

Skill in oral and written communication in order to prepare or compose correspondence, convey statements of fact or make inquiries, and to provide assistance.

Knowledge of the methods and procedures that are part of or subordinate to a program area (CRIS), ARMPS, ARIS, annual reports, travel, post doctorates, agreements).

Working knowledge of the work processes and procedures of an administrative field (e.g., office administration, budget, travel, agreements, human resources, procurement/purchasing, pay and leave).

Knowledge of the clerical requirements and processes involved in maintaining the functional programs of the Unit.

Knowledge of technical terminology, correspondence guidelines, and editing/proofreading techniques.

Extensive knowledge of the rules, regulations, operations, and business practices of the office.

Knowledge of Agency's office management policies, regulations and procedures in the areas of budget, travel, human resources, agreements, and procurement/purchasing.

Knowledge of secretarial/clerical and administrative/program concepts and practices to complete assignments and to recommend changes to existing procedures or to develop new ideas to enhance or streamline procedures.

Knowledge of duties, priorities, commitments, policies, and program goals of the staff sufficient to perform assignments such as reviewing incoming materials which may affect the Unit and taking appropriate follow-up action, to locate and summarize materials in order to respond to correspondence or phone calls, and to implement and/or develop new procedures and guidelines for the Unit.

Ability to serve customers and customer needs through interaction with individuals at all levels in order to facilitate expeditious handling of requests and inquiries.

Ability to plan and organize the work by coordinating priorities and commitments of the office in order to serve as liaison, prepare background material, and anticipate information requests.

Skills in the use of personal computers to access, manipulate, and retrieve information from automated systems (ARIS, PCTRAV, ARMPS, STAR, PCMS, FFIS, internet literature, and other information searching, web site development, reports development, etc.).

Skill in operating a personal computer, printers, scanners, peripherals, word processing, spreadsheet and presentation software (e.g., Excel, Microsoft Word, Power Point, Word Perfect, Adobe, PhotoShop, CorelDraw, Front Page). A qualified typist is required.

## **2. Supervisory Controls.**

The supervisor sets the overall objectives. Incumbent independently plans and follows through on commitments and requests made by the supervisor and other professional staff. Is expected to organize own work to move from one assignment to another without instructions, following established procedures, and giving consideration to relative priorities and urgent requests.

Having developed expertise in the line of work, is responsible for planning and carrying out assignments to completion, resolving most conflicts that arise, coordinating the work with others as necessary, and interpreting policy on own initiative in terms of established objectives; technical guidance is sought only when unusual work situations arise or when available guidelines are lacking. Incumbent keeps the supervisor informed of progress and potentially controversial matters.

Work is evaluated on the basis of overall accomplishment and effectiveness and on the appearance and editorial quality of material that is issues from the office. Methods used in achieving end results are not reviewed in detail.

## **3. Guidelines**

Guidelines are available but not completely applicable to the work or have gaps in specificity. Some established procedures and specific guidelines are available for reference purposes. Guidelines include dictionaries, style manuals, manufacturer's manuals and tutorials for PC hardware and software, Departmental and Agency regulations and policies, Agency policies and procedures (P&P's), manuals, instructions, sample work products and precedents, and the operating policies of the supervisor.

Incumbent uses judgment in selecting the appropriate guidelines and references for application to specific cases, referring significant deviations or unusual situations to the supervisor.

#### **4. Complexity**

Incumbent performs a full range of secretarial and program duties and responsibilities in support of the Unit, consisting of typing and word processing, filing, making travel arrangements, budget, procurement, referring phone calls and visitors, etc., and program work of a more varied and substantive nature (e.g., preparing special reports based on gathering and interpreting information from the staff and the files, performing office automation duties which require a variety of software and differing methods and approaches, and setting up travel arrangements, meetings and conferences).

Incumbent decides what needs to be done and how to accomplish it by analyzing the issues involved in the particular situation and the needs, priorities, goals and commitments of the supervisor and staff.

In addition to routine decisions, significant judgment and interpretation are required for many decisions that are based on factors that are not clear-cut or well established, i.e., guidelines may have to be adapted or modified to one-of-a-kind situations. Incumbent must select from many alternatives and exercise originality in solving a wide variety of procedural and operational problems in the program and administrative functional areas.

#### **5. Scope and Effect**

The position supports the Research Leader and staff by relieving them of various secretarial/administrative and program support duties, allowing them to focus on the organization's primary mission.

The work is essential to the smooth operation of the office where workload must be properly managed in order to meet deadlines. The work performed affects the accuracy and reliability of further processes and contributes directly to the overall image and effectiveness of the office.

**6. Personal Contacts**  
**7. Purpose of Contacts**

Principle contacts are with co-workers, office callers and visitors, administrative support service personnel (procurement/purchasing, human resources, travel, budget, etc.). and outside vendors. Other contacts include the general public, professional organizations and societies, university personnel and representatives of government and industry.

Contacts are for the purpose of exchanging information with staff, supervisor, and other internal and external sources, planning and coordinating work efforts, and resolving operational and procedural problems or concerns in the accomplishment of the incumbent's work.

**8. Physical Demands**

Work is essentially sedentary, however, requires some walking, standing, bending, and carrying of light items such as papers, books, or small parts. No special physical demands are required to perform the work.

**9. Work Environment**

The work environment involves the everyday risks or discomforts that require normal safety precautions typical of such places as offices, meeting and training rooms, libraries, or commercial vehicles, e.g., use of safe work practices with office equipment, avoidance of trips and falls, observance of fire regulations and traffic signals. The work area is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated.

**D. Other Considerations**

May serve on special committees or special projects (i.e., CARE Team, local or national councils, planning committees, EEO, mentoring program, awards, recruitment panel, Newsletter Editor) in either a lead or supporting role.